

insurrectionary ecology by anon.

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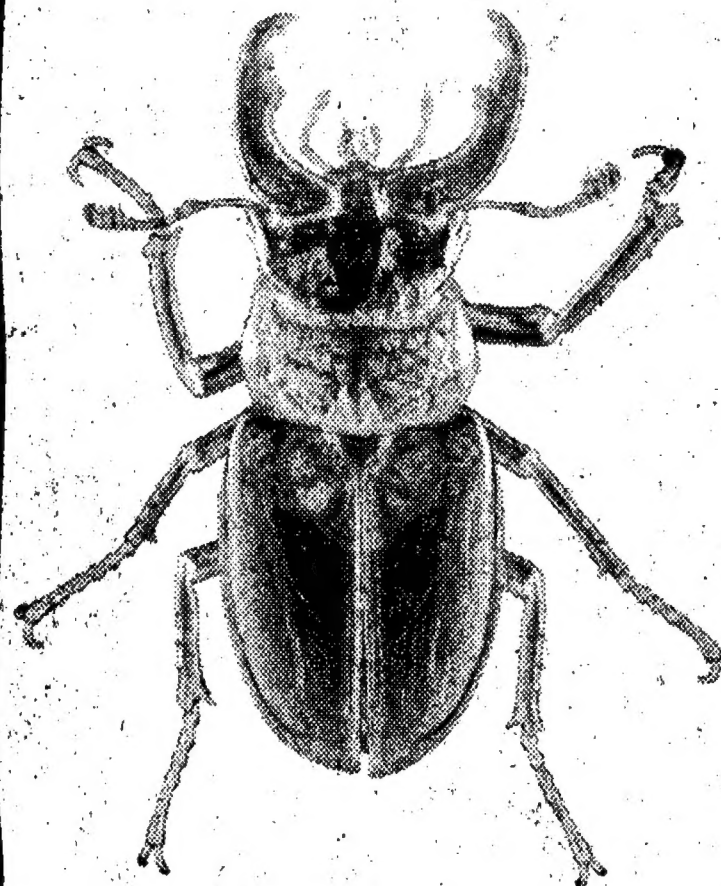
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insurrectionary ★ecology★

a document for dissemination and discussion



by anon.

A Reason to Begin

Recently I've been trying to organise my thoughts about ecological direct action having found myself in a state of confusion and unease. I wanted to become more deliberate and less reactionary in the things I did. Alongside reflecting on events I started reading bits and pieces, books friends had recommended, old pamphlets that had once caught my eye and I had squirreled away.

A couple of years ago now my favourite journal, *Do or Die: voices from the ecological resistance* (www.eco-action.org/dod), finally set free it's editors, after a decade, to take on other tasks. A void was left and at various gatherings requests were made for people to self-publish zines and pamphlets about ecological issues, politics, and direct action, in order to keep the discussion and debate going on the UK scene. As part of the way I organise my thoughts is scribbling things down I thought I'd compile them and throw them out there, mainly because I'd like other people to do the same thing. As I'm mainly writing for me it's an eclectic, bias, synthesis of stuff I found interesting. Raid it for the bits you like, discard the rest, it should be short enough not to require much commitment. But if any of it should catch your imagination, as some of these ideas caught mine, then for fuck's sake when you put my scribbles down go out and do something.

So why am I stressing about what I'm doing, why do I feel a burning urgency to get my act together? In such

a short time I've seen so much that I love lost, massive ecological changes accelerating, new unforeseen problems raising their heads, and the juggernaut of industrial civilisation ploughing onwards:

Today time is not marching on our side, but against us. We must fight all the harder. We cannot pass the gauntlet of defending the wild to unborn generations. It is that wildness and those unborn generations that are in peril today. What we do in our lives, in this moment, is of utmost importance. For no other generation has the weight of the future rested so heavily on the present. (Do or Die 10, Down with the Empire, Up with the Spring.)

For me our most urgent and pressing task is to protect our ecology. Ecology is the relationships between living things, and living things and their environments. That wonderful, chaotic, tumultuous, self organising, ever changing pool of life that makes up our home. Without a relationship with other species life has no context and is not tenable. Dave Foreman editor of *Eco-Defence; a field guide to monkey-wrenching*, and infamous for opening his mouth before fully engaging his brain, summed up this wider concern in a debate with the left winger Murray Bookchin;

I am deeply concerned about what is happening to people all over the world. Yet, unlike much of the left, I'm also very concerned with what's happening to a million other species on the planet who hasn't asked for this eco-catastrophe to happen to

take the problem seriously we will educate ourselves, analyse the situation, spot the weak points and take action against them as if we mean it. If we don't act as if we mean it, as if we weren't facing a terrible social and ecological crisis, then what are we doing? We become a group of desperate people engaged in a deluded hobby, an aimless generation playing dangerous games with the security services. It's scary but unless we act seriously we might as well just start the end of the world party now. If we see ourselves as part of a global movement then all the things we are fighting against - ourselves, domination, capitalism - are already killing people in our movement. Our inaction is complicity. If our country was being attacked by fascists it would be much easier to get people to take it seriously. but we are the ones sustaining the enemy and it's much harder to sort out ourselves. Let's get it together we've got too many beautiful things to lose. (Earth First! Ha! Ha! Ha!)



of violence other than in self-defence is damaging and often unnecessary and unjustifiable. People might shrug their shoulders at a brief punch up with security to make your escape, but taking a baseball bat to someone or putting an incendiary under a family car are the tactics of terrorism and rightly turns people off for no great gain, when there are always alternatives. This type of action also brings down oppression which curtails more effective activities. We should use our freedoms well, while we still have them. As I've said if violence is used it should be in self-defence (including self-defence while you take offensive action), and if possible it should be popular, for reason a general riot is more widely understood and accepted than elite violence.

I realise that these writings have been quite narrow in their scope, but as stated my motivation was personal and biased. After you've put down your wrenches, if you pick up a pen I'd love to hear other opinions, and as the saying goes Photocopy and Distribute. Now to end with a foam flecked rant ...

Without analysis and strategy and effective focused action we are in danger of losing the point. Actions can turn into another branch of the trend towards dangerous sports, privileged people looking for extreme experience in a dulled world, an outlet for angst driven rebellion, or a comforter to make you think you're doing something. Because the problems are so horrendously big we are running away from them even in our actions. If we

them. And I have a connection that is fundamental and very passionate with those other species. I feel a real kinship with them, as well as with members of my own species.
(Defending the Earth)

Our ecology fundamentally underpins our existence, and our ecology is under sustained assault from rapacious and dominating social systems. These systems are maintained and fostered by human elites, general ignorance and apathy, and fear. I think the point we find our selves at is, that although we must develop new social systems and protect old ones that balance with the wider ecology, the urgency for our long term survival, and the immediate survival of other species is to defend and protect the wider ecology now.

Often, recently I have friends who believe in the need for action in its defence, frozen into inaction. Whether this is from fully trying to comprehend a situation before entering it, or trying to fathom the best action to take to try and sort out a situation, but then feeling overwhelmed and disillusioned.

At its best Earth First!'s style offers a way forward that the left would be wise to learn from. We aren't rebelling against the system because we're sour on life. We're fighting for beauty, for life, for joy. We kick up our heels in delight at a wilderness day, we smile at a flower, at a hummingbird. We laugh at our opponents, and we laugh at our selves. We are willing to let our actions set the finer points of our philosophy rather than debating

endlessly about our program. We are willing to get started now, to make mistakes, to learn as we go.
(Defending the Earth)

Previous political movements have often relied heavily on ideology, 'the dead weight of atrophied ideas'. Though imagination and careful thought is vital, ideas mustn't stand between us and a lived reality. I personally don't think we have time to wait for future revolution, it is a process we must start now. Ideology is a set of ideas which tries to define life, what it should be like and how we should act. This is impossible as life is an interrelated fluid series of processes that you can live and engage with, but you can't define from outside the situation. Life is like poetry, it is subjective, and the only reality is your interaction with it. On it's own a poem means nothing - life like poetry only has meaning when you get involved. Autopoeisis, self-poetry, literally self-making, is a process we see all around us in the natural world. Life constantly creates it's self in the context of it's ecology, and also for us our social context and relations to others. As a self conscious part of the ecology we must be insurrectionary with all of the movement and action that the term implies. If ever a theory needed to be defined by it's practice it is this one. We shouldn't spend all our time organising for a mystical future, but live a present praxis i.e. theory defined by it's actions and relevance. 'I succeed only in losing my grip on the present: most of the time I live out of step with what I am, marking time with dead time'.
(Revolution of Everyday Life)

pub. Even seed planting on derelict land and 'guerrilla tree planting' can be a no risk introduction that people can see results from. These small activities also build a culture of resistance at street level, and are more accessible to a wider range of people than civil disobedience tactics.

The final point that I'd like to make may be controversial amongst ecosaboteurs, but hey I'm holding the pen, is that of people's perceptions of our actions. These are always going to be mixed, but often people have a begrudging respect for people who take direct action in defence of things they care about. That grudging respect can work in our favour in terms of tacit support, turning a blind eye, opposing increased police powers etc... If a community's local woodland is threatened it's, nowadays, valid for people to think about occupying the site, blocking access, climbing trees. It is also surprising to many 'campaigners' how many peoples thoughts stray to sabotage. We can build on this. I believe it's detrimental to claim your actions to groups with names like 'The Earth Liberation Front'. They are exclusive in that they project a certain image. This image often 'professional' or 'macho' appeals to some budding 'activists'. What appeals to people is results of actions taken. If you have to use a name why not 'Weekend Campers Against Reckless Development' or 'Walkers for Abundant Wildlife Habitats'. It'd be better to have sabotage seen as a popular easy activity for people who care about their environment than shrouded in activist 'cool'. I also think that the use

action in Britain can also empower you to take action in more ecologically rich areas of the world and take effective action there where the impact on the global ecology may be greater. Resources: Action planning - look at www.eco-action.org/dod/ the article in Issue 9 'Action Stations', Sabotage skills - look at 'The ozymandia Sabotage Handbook' Vols 1 & 2 at www.reachoutpub/osh/. Being careful - look at 'Without a Trace' at www.omnipresence.mahost.org/forensics.htm, save these onto a USB Memory Stick at a Net Cafe rather than have them leave traces on your personal hard drives).

A problem with using sabotage as a tactic is that it can be isolating due to security considerations. The only real problems that this poses is finding others to work with when needed, and providing a staggered access route of perceived risk taking for those starting to take action. Issues such as GM crops will arise, where a larger number of people were willing to 'just pull up crops', especially considering the reluctance to prosecute. These opportunities to introduce more people to covert action should be seized. You can go out in small groups to: spray paint stencil, alter bill boards, do invasive stickering, glue locks, add your own padlocks, smash windows, pull survey stakes, paint stripper company status symbols, and generally be creative with your mischief. These actions can be far more empowering and social than getting dragged out of the road arrested and held for five hours, especially if you're foolish you can often get away with it after the

Our will to act is constantly co-opted and thwarted by other agendas that seek to control, mediate, or direct our actions with calls for reasonableness, coherence to ideology, or solidarity. If we have a genuine desire to defend our environment, to create new living situations with our friends, we should make sure we are informed, but we should go for it. It's only in genuine action that new realities will be found. This clarity from acting from within the situation is described in this passage from 'The Revolution of Everyday Life':

Human energy does not let it's self be led away into the inhuman without a fight. Where is the field of battle? Always in the immediate extension of lived experience, in spontaneous action. I am not suggesting that the abstraction of mediations has to be countered by some wild, instinctive spontaneity: that would be merely to reproduce on a higher level the idiotic choice between pure speculation and mindless activism, the disjunction between theory and practice. I am saying that tactical adequacy involves launching the attack at the very spot where the highwaymen of experience lay their ambush, the spot where the attempt to act is transformed and perverted, at the precise moment when spontaneous action is sucked up by misinterpretation and misunderstanding. At this point there is a momentary crystallisation of consciousness which illuminates both the demands of the will to live and the fate the social organisation has in store for them: living experience and it's cooptation by the machinery of authoritarianism. The Point where resistance

begins is the look out post of subjectivity. For identical reasons, my knowledge of the world exists effectively only at the moment when I act to transform the world.

(Revolution of Everyday Life)

'Recent' lived insurrections such as the rolling conflict of the battle against the Newbury Bypass, the evolving situations of the defence against the M11 Link Road, the covert sabotage of genetic crops, were beautiful, inspiring, frustrating, and constantly surprising. These were well planned, but it was a process defined by action and experience as it unfolded. Before many actions were taken it would have been difficult to conceive that they would have been feasible. As the M11 graffiti read, **'We are far more possible than your most powerful imaginings'** : this continues to be true.

doesn't help the ecology. They gain more experience, more manpower and equipment, and bigger budgets. Striking at isolated capital when there is no one around and leaving without a trace does their heads in.

We are a small highly populated island devastated by industrialisation but in response to this groups and movements such as the Romantics, Ramblers, and Wildlife Trusts have enabled us to have access to large areas of our 'natural heritage'. Go walking, camping, biking in the National Parks and 'Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty' (AONB). Many of our most delicate and valuable wildlife sites are listed as biological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Their locations are listed on the internet. Get to know those in your favourite areas (Although the Government lists the whereabouts of SSSI's and what actions can damage them, they only list general percentages of damage caused, not what damage and by whom. If someone took on the job of using the Freedom of Information Act to gather and publish these facts it would fill a large public information vacuum that would be valuable to all sorts of groups and campaigns).

Build a relationship with landscapes and the species that live there and find out what's threatening them (www.habitat.org.uk, this site lists daily news from most of the UK's large environmental groups and newspapers). With a small amount of research and practice you can acquire a set of basic skills that can enable you to carry out effective sabotages. Taking

- We must take direct action to confront and stop the destruction of our ecology.
- We must be able to dedicate part of our lives to it but not have it take over our lives.
- We don't want to get arrested / processed / locked up.
- Land defence is our strength, we can experience patches of 'wildness' and have an affinity with it.
- We like tangible targets and to be able to perceive the impacts of our actions. It empowers us to take further sustained action.

Over the last decade, and more, hundreds upon hundreds of people have been involved in acts of sabotage of varying scale, from graffiti to crop trashing to machine wrecking. They have felt the clarity of adrenaline during the night, caught the sparkle of a friend's eye above the mask, shared satisfied grins whilst sat on hill sides watching the Sun rise knowing they got the job done. These can be contained actions that have a devastating effect, or rely on the sustained attrition of different groups working in different areas targeting the same issues because it's seen to be effective and becomes popular. Remember you don't have to confront authority directly to confront ecological destruction. We should only confront authority face to face when we have run out of other effective options, or if we can win. Every time we lose to authority all we gain is the status of martyrdom, this

A Sense of Perspective

Moments of time no longer radiate, as they did in the cyclical time of early societies, time is a thread stretched from birth to death, from memories of the past to expectations of the future, on which an eternity of survival strings out. A row of instants and hybrid presents nibbled away by what passed and what is yet to come. The feeling of living in symbiosis with cosmic forces - the sense of the simultaneous - revealed joys to our forefathers which our passing presence in the world is hard put to provide.
(Revolution of Everyday Life).

When we see history as a series of events, or even worse perceive ourselves in an isolated bubble of moving time disconnected from the past, we are disempowered. Our actions, any actions, seem like pissing in the ocean in the face of our opposition. But our actions are not isolated events, they are explosions in a web of relations, many unforeseen. The project of liberation has been vying with domination for thousands of years, and continues. The ripples cast by our actions shape ourselves, our relations, and inspire others now and in the future. Knowing the history of our movements and others' attempts, gives us context beyond ephemeral slogans. History is cumulative.

In a sense there is no beginning and there is no end - it's all process - an open ended question. It has been pointed out that people respond to

events rather than processes - particularly in spectacular society, where social phenomena are prised loose from their social context and reproduced as disembodied and mystifying 'events' (conversely, ecology is, if nothing else, the story of context, the antithesis of spectacular amnesia). (Do or Die Issue 8).

This is a struggle we will never 'win', there will be no tangible 'victory', but every action you take has the possibility of adding to a better future. If you understand that, then all of your actions have meaning and importance. In the case of ecological defence they can also save places and the species that live there now.

The following books give an impression of the context of the struggles for freedom and the legacy of domination, read them and make up your own mind.

- Down With the Empire, Up With the Spring: part one, Recent Pre-History - In Do or Die #10
- Against Leviathan, Against His-story, by Fredy Perlman.
- The Ecology of Freedom, by Murray Bookchin
Guns, Germs, and Steel: a short history of everybody for the last 13,000 years, by Jared Diamond

profit or providing materials and markets on which other dominant economy depends. Again they are vulnerable because they must maintain the the appearance of normalcy: they can be embarrassed out of office, they are triply vulnerable because they cannot openly crush the opposition that embarrasses and harasses them. They must be wooers as well as doers.

(War of the Flea)

This statement is applicable to corporations, in many cases even more so than governments. The strategic use of all forms of campaigning without negotiation or compromise can exploit companies' weaknesses to the point where they are forced to make a climbdown. When fighting the Government you must be prepared to lose the battle then wait for the U-turn on the next project. Government will use all its resources not to be seen to back down in the face of Direct Action, where as a corporations decisions tend to be more heavily based on economic factors (Though dated, one of the best campaigning guides is still 'Road Raging: top tips for wrecking road building' and can be found at www.eco-action.org/rr/index.html). The problem with campaigning is that it requires a minimum of several people to dedicate a large portion of their time / lives to it. When this happens the right campaigns can take on momentum that no one could foresee leading to insurrectionary situations that provide experience and training to a large group of people. If the right situation arises, and you can, go for it. Some issues, as I see them, that I have raised so far are:

tion) we're ordinary people. You can see a stretch of land, appreciate it's value, draw your line in the sand. These things motivate us, make us stand firm. GM crops have massive far reaching social and ecological implications. They also have a physical manifestation littered around the countryside (location handily listed) that you can turn up in your own time at night and uproot.

There will always be, I hope, a level of protest. It is educational and draws people's interest. It helps create a culture of resistance which raises awareness and possibilities in people's minds. When it embraces the carnivalesque, it's a display of our love of life and disdain for their dead world. It smashes the spectacle and subverts their images. Symbols are powerful things and can have effects in the real world but they are symbolic, as is protest. As we know we must spend most of our time in the real world building our dreams and visions of the future, and we must resist in the real world.

The most effective way of resisting ecological destruction is campaigning - using every option available to us from letter writing, protest, civil disobedience, to sabotage, involving as many members of the population as possible. A war of attrition. It was pointed out in a book by a bloke called Robert Taber titled 'War of the Flea' that:

They are vulnerable because they must at all costs keep the economy functioning and showing a

Evolving a Counter Culture

We need a culture that is ecological, that is politically and socially thoughtful. We need a culture that will sustain us in our struggles and meet our needs as individuals. We need a culture that celebrates life and joy and beauty, where people and other species are not sacrificed to things.

The "Green" movement has often been seen as ascetic, constantly asking people to give up the "good" things in life, and is often seen, when appeals have failed, to favour repression in terms of encouraging government to legislate against people's behaviour;

Freud taught us there are two ways in which society can deal with moral vice. It can try to repress the act by some combination of intimidation and punishment. As every naughty child knows, this works but only for as long as watchful authority is on hand to enforce its dictates. If it once looks aside, the vice re-emerges, possibly to be perpetrated with greater relish as a forbidden pleasure. The better course, he advised, is to find ways to divert unacceptable conduct into acceptable forms of gratification. This he called sublimation, which might mean salvaging some residue of nobility that lies hidden in otherwise base conduct. By and large the strategy of the environmental movement in dealing with wasteful consumption has been repression. Committed ecologists have often been sternly censorious, meeting our human frailties with doctrinaire intolerance. There is a strain

of stern asceticism running through environmental politics that has been unwilling to recognise, let alone condone the connection between consumerism and the search for personal fulfilment.

'Voice of the Earth' by Theodore Roszak (most of this book is of limited interest).

Shame and guilt have been used by authoritarian religious and political movements for thousands of years. The conclusion that many 'radical ecologists' have come to is that the roots of our ecological and social problems are buried in manipulation and domination by hierarchies and elites with vested interests. I don't want to be constricted by a Green government, or for continuing environmental catastrophe to edge us towards eco-fascism. You have to acknowledge people's impressions, and people's impressions of the ecological movement often see it in this light - as repressive. If people are not to revolt against ecologically better ways of doing things, they must decide to make changes themselves.

The other side of the coin that we are faced with is that the world just cannot sustain equality and freedom that embraces current levels of consumerism, it has to develop an ecological sensibility:

The passion to own, indeed to waste is more than mindless extravagance, consumer egalitarianism is clearly the inevitable adjunct of pointed out that people respond to events rather than processes - particularly in spectacular society, where social phenomena are prised lose from their social con-

ing around for hours holding a banner and handing out leaflets, is worthy and perhaps opens a few people's eyes - at best it embarrasses a company, but all the time you're standing there you know the destruction continues. When it comes down to it, by and large, we don't have enough faith in the system to want to change it. Changes in legislation and business practices are handy stalling tactics while we get ourselves together to be more 'unreasonable' than your average businessman ever dreamed of.

With a lot of ad hoc environmental resistance a lot of perceived problems and frustrations arise because we are not professional. I don't mean that we're not good at what we do, I don't mean that we're not determined to preserve habitats fit for a diverse range of species, just that we've got lives to live. Nothing is more frustrating to the person who has immersed themselves in the role of 'activist' than people who won't drop all their other priorities and mobilise themselves for the latest crisis. There is always a crisis and I only have one life, it's mine. It's important, and to be honest it's one of the things that makes stuff worth fighting for. That I love the world and am a part of it is a valid subjective view point that places me within the ecology. To sustain our reason for struggle we must also look out for ourselves.

Ecological resistance comes into it's own when we have land to defend (antiroads, anti-quarrying) or we have something obvious to go out and trash (GM crops). That's because (with a stretch of the imagina-

in their wake are in retreat. What we have now, and need to build on, is effectively a 'militia', people with training and experience that can get involved when they can. We need to support that for each other. More often now people tend to chose their individual arrests when a campaign holds enough value for them and the action is of strategic importance, or rely on enthusiastic new people who haven't yet had enough dragging court cases, fines, and short prison sentences to make them wary and cynical.

Most ecological 'direct activists' veer towards the bracket of irreverent chaotic joyous rebels, we lack the quiet stoic determination of the 'peace campaigner' or the emotive responses of the 'animal rights activist'. This is obviously a total generalisation, and I realise we tend to campaign on issues across the board, but it holds elements of truth. Why aren't we out every Saturday morning shutting down a different quarry in the National Park when the Sabs are out doing the local hunts? (Possibly because we're out sabbing, but ...). In Sabbing you pit your wits against an obvious opposition, they're there to kill a fox, not just turning up to work on a Saturday morning. Also, when you are successful you save a life, you see the fox running free across the fields, you don't just have an unquantifiable impact on someone's profit and loss account for the year. People need to feel that they are making a tangible difference.

Demos bore us, or at least frustrate us. Stand-

text and reproduced as disembodied and mystifying 'events' (conversely, ecology is, if nothing else, the story of context - the antithesis political equality, of necessity, a democratic social order must be an ecological order; and the truer the democracy (meaning the more authentically accessible the power and the goods) the more real must be the collective ecological intelligence of the society be. The standards of consumption set by aristocrats and the early industrial bourgeoisie simply cannot be extended to society on mass rather, the desires that undergird those standards - the craving for specialness, distinction, personal worth - must be uncovered, examined, reshaped. The aspiration must be peeled down to it's essence. In practical environmental terms, what does it mean (in the words of the old populist slogan) to proclaim 'Every man a King'? (Voice of the Earth)

People have a desire to live unrestrained. They want fulfilment, and also security and safety. Desire has been manipulated and manufactured by advertising and the media. Fulfilment has been left hollow by consumerism - false participation in the spectacle of society replacing real relationships. As this becomes more extreme people begin to wonder about spending the majority of their life working to spend their evenings sitting in isolation in front of their wide screen TV, being told what expensive products they must buy to be a legitimate member of society, and watching other peoples lives. There is a wonderful wild world out there that I would be part of, that I am part of. It

is under sustained assault by the way many of us chose to live our lives, and the perceived choices offered to us by the systems we live under. Our cultures need to be biocentric as we are part of the biosphere. We need to constantly think about our relations to each other, other species and the environment, and act responsibly. We need to respect people's genuine needs and individuality. If protecting our ecology is not to involve using shame, guilt and general oppression to prevent people acting irresponsibly it needs to be a project of full participation, voluntary co-operation, and mutual aid. It also has to have the genuine needs of individuals at its heart.

Nothing gives me the right to speak in the name of other people. I am my own delegate. Yet at the same time I can't help thinking that my life is not of concern to me alone, but that I serve the interests of thousands of other people by living the way I live and by struggling to live more intensely and more freely. My friends and I are one and we know it. Each of us is acting for each other by acting for himself. Such transparency is the only way to true participation.

(Revolution of Everyday Life)

If we don't want to heckle people from a position removed we must attract people based on their own self interest to join a cultural project that meets their needs and fulfils their desires, that is both rich and diverse. 'To tell the truth, the only reason anyone fights is for what they love. Fighting for everyone else

act directly to educate, conserve, restore, and create alternative ecological solutions to our everyday problems, but all this will come to nothing unless we take confrontational Direct Action to stop the destruction of wild species and their habitats. Let's not simplify the situation into 'goodies' and 'baddies', life is rarely that simple, yet often taking action is necessary. Let's be considered and, hopefully, effective in the actions we take.

When the current wave of ecological Direct Action started in Britain there was no 'Aggravated Trespass' or raft of other laws that they've brought in to curtail our activities. People didn't have a clue what to expect. You could pile on to machines and into offices on a daily basis supported by the dole or student grant and leave with a self-righteous buzz and at the worst a slapped wrist for 'Breach of the Peace'. Even when the Criminal Justice Act came in to force the anti-roads movement was in a state of chaotic insurrection that powered us through the first thousand arrests or so.

People become despondent that there are not continuous large scale open ecological struggles in Britain. I believe it's because they made what we were doing specifically illegal and undermined our personal financial support, and that confused us. If we want the equivalent of a 'standing army' of eco-activists then they have to be financially supported. The days of 'the great unwashed' hitching the length and breadth of the country leaving chaos and celebration

Lights, Camera ... Action!

Ecological Direct Action can be incredibly difficult to take. Why? Well apart from sometimes being scary, occasionally risking life and limb, and often putting your future freedom at risk, it quite often involves fucking other people over. I consider myself to be a relatively nice person. I understand that life can be a complicated mess of compromise and circumstance. People make choices that, maybe if they felt that they had other options, they wouldn't make. And, on average there's a lot more plain tossers out there than outright bastards. Yet we are faced with the situation of seeing the things we love destroyed or, where necessary, disrupting peoples lives.

Why have I started my tubthumping section like this? Well, it's because a lot of eco-anarchist propaganda makes us seem like arrogant thugs or quasi-religious extremists, and most of the eco-anarchists, eco-saboteurs, and radical conservationists I know aren't. Alongside caring deeply about people and planet, what they do tend to have is a barely banked fire, a smouldering rage at what they see happening to the world around them. 'Most' of them consider that the response that our current system is making, in fact, the response that our current profit driven system is capable of making, is woefully inadequate. Educating people to alter their habits and outlook is vital, but when faced with the onslaught of media and marketing, on it's own it's not going to happen in time to save anything. I believe we must

is only the consequence' (Saint-Just taken from Revolution of Everyday Life).

People are tired of surviving, 'survival is simply to die very slowly'. People want to live. Life is sold to us as the acquisition of things. This quest for a standard of living defined by what you can be convinced to buy is destroying 'life' on our planet. The risk is that people will suffer greater repression by authority that is forced into desperate action to avert the economic impacts of ecological disaster. If consumption by people within the captive cycles of consumer culture, or the increased consumption of people in the opening markets of global capitalism, is not to destroy our ecology to the point it cannot sustain us (or other species irrespective of our needs), then they must be attracted to join in a cultural project that offers viable alternatives. People must be able to satisfy desires for personal fulfilment in ways that don't risk our future, or the future of the planets other species. This can only happen by us starting now, by creating and discovering those alternatives, and recognising those compatible values embedded in traditional cultures. The utopianists Lewis Mumford and Ernest Callenbach offered the following ideas:

Plenitude, a sense of 'enoughness' that can only be achieved when people are encouraged to ask 'wealth for what?', and the suggestion 'people take joy in one another's company, in the beauty of the land, in simple sensuous pleasures that cost no resources'.

The project is to build a social culture that ranges from voluntary simplicity to a 'radical hedonism' (do as you will but let it harm none, including the lives of other species). That is based on a natural wildness - a 'joie de vie' [sic].

*'The only safeguard against authority and rigidity
setting in is a playful attitude'*
(Revolution of Everyday Life).

It must include connecting people, and re-enchanting people, with the natural world. How can you care for something you don't have a real relationship with? Real nature must be integral to our everyday lives. Not a mythological anthropomorphic supernature tailored to human needs, or a theme park romantic nature to visit, but a chaotic nature that is independent of our concerns. Passion and love should lead us to play and fight alongside those who show the same desires, to build relationships to break out of the isolation of modern society. It is also important that our cultures recognise what people value and hold dear that are not destructive or oppressive, and the underlying motivations behind destructive and oppressive actions and values. We should value aspects of our different cultures that allow us to build bridges between our different cultural understandings, and accept the diversity of living alongside different cultures. The ecological movement has often been motivated by the need to conserve and protect. Many of the values we are looking to encourage can already be found in peoples cultures. These values should be en-

—I have to acknowledge the existence of, and learn to recognise, invisible hierarchies.

—have to assume, even if I don't yet see how, that I am perpetuating them, either by taking more power, or accepting less power.

—I have to talk about this to people I work with, and honestly ask for their thoughts and their help in identifying how I perpetuate them.

—I have to listen to what they say, and try changing my behaviour as if it were true, whether I agree or not

—I have to look at my own background to understand why I act as I do, and actually begin to change who I am. I have to become someone who instinctively shares power.

—I have to personally commit to learning, using, and demanding the use of, the tools for organising equally that already exist, at all times.

—I have to learn insight, courage and tact, to confront power inequalities where I see them, with humility, with compassion, with privacy if possible, with humour if not.

—There are no exceptions those seven steps apply to you reading this, yes, that's you.

with yourself and confidence comes and goes. All these problems are magnified when working in larger groups and with people that you don't have intimate relationships with. People will balk at using group skills and facilitation techniques, often when they are not familiar with using them effectively, and occasionally because they undermine their power. The facilitation and group work guide 'the Resource Manual for a Living Revolution' points out some of the reasons why this might happen:

New tools and skills frequently feel awkward the first time that they are tried. The process used to learn them often contradicts ingrained patterns of behaviour such as domination, competition, withdrawal, criticism and cynicism. Many of the tools in this manual are specifically designed to shake us out of stereotypical roles in which we have functioned for a long time. Such as leader, follower, expert, teacher and student. These learned roles and behaviour patterns have been useful in the society in which we live but they get in our way when we try to create more flexible alternatives. (Resource Manual for a Living Revolution).

There are plenty of facilitation and group work techniques out there designed to encourage full participation and challenge hierarchy for people to experiment with. Here's some advice given in 'Everybody stop it - EF! and invisible hierarchies' How did they get here and how do we get rid of them;

Here's a beginning:

couraged and strengthened by practical application. This can often be easier and more reassuring for people than constant calls for change:

We were becoming uneasy about the recurring theme that .people must change.. We began to wonder if the reasons why the parties advocating radical change were so unsuccessful was because they were striking against the resistance of people who had changed, who had been compelled to change too much. The experience of industrialisation had been driven and relentless change, and continues to be so even in countries which pride themselves on having reached an advanced stage of development, of being post-industrial, of being .developed., constantly require accelerating change from their privileged populations. So why should we expect that exhortations to change will be welcomed by those who have known little else for at least two centuries. In this context, the desire to conserve, to protect, to safeguard, to rescue, to resist becomes the heart of the radical project.”
(Do or Die issue 10, Down with the Empire, Up With the Spring).

Safety and stability are important to the majority of people. This need is magnified in times of crisis. People will run away, fall back on the illusion of stability of authoritarian relationships, or rely on co-operation and mutual aid based on affinity and trust. If we are trying to evolve and protect an alternative society this will matter even more for us. 'Relatively peaceful so-

cial struggle and construction is only possible up to a point - the point at which it begins to seriously undermine elite power'. (Do or Die issue 10, Down With the Empire, Up With the Spring)

Without going back to the history of the Spanish Anarchists or other libertarian revolutions, look what happened to recent alternative social experiments: new travellers, urban squat communities, free parties and festivals. Oppression caused many people to give up and conform. A lot of people, including some of the most creative, left for other countries, and the things that we held dear were sanitized hollowed out and pale imitations sold back to us as acceptable rebellion. A corporate world where everything is exchanged, nothing is taken, nothing is given.

Social centres (squatted or legal), autonomous zones, housing co-ops, free parties and gigs, land co-ops, shared allotments, trespass, wild camping, acquiring things for free, giving things away for free... develop thoughtful alternatives to play with. Create cross generational spaces where people can build relationships that will nurture and support peoples changes in their own time - 'Our responsibility to any (r)evolutionary process is not to make revolution but to evolve countercultures that can make revolutionaries.' (Do or die issue 10, Down With the Empire, Up With the Spring). Although the cultures we create may in some ways be significantly different to mainstream culture it cannot be escapist, or it will be isolated, demonised, and destroyed. It must be based in the places people live and

The hero sacrifices the power of his role and his rifle. And when finally, he is burnt out, he follows Voltaire's advice and cultivates his garden. Meantime his mediocrity becomes a model for the common run of mortals. (Revolution of Everyday Life).

People behave in these ways because of real needs, desires and insecurities and the fear of being themselves. Being truly yourself is the only thing you can maintain in the long run, and the fairest thing to yourself and others if you wish to participate genuinely in sustained collective organisation. These are roles and habits that we 'fall in to' - we may find that we have to be active in guarding ourselves and each other against these patterns of behaviour:

The elimination of authoritarian and hierarchical structures is important for democratising groups, but does not mean the rejection of all structures. Groups that have taken the latter course have generally become ineffective, or have reverted to the same, but no longer explicit authoritarian leadership as before. Good group functioning is a product of cooperative structures and the intelligent, responsible participation of the groups members. (Resource Manual for a Living Revolution).

In an informal meeting between a few long-term friends then using structures and organising techniques might not be needed, as long as you are all being honest and feeling confident at the time. But, to be truthful sometimes it's difficult to be honest

middle - but never outside the hierarchy. Whether this side of it or beyond it. The role is thus the means of access to the mechanism of culture. A form of initiation. It is also the medium of exchange of individual sacrifice, and in a sense performs a compensatory function. And lastly as a residue of separation it strives to construct a behavioural unity; in this aspect it depends on identification.

(Revolution of Everyday Life).

People often feel trapped in roles, either because they feel that they have played them for so long they would lose the security of status if they stopped, or that they are forced into role by the needs and projections of others. It is usually both, often an unconscious conspiracy to preserve the illusion. When people act inauthentically they preserve hierarchy 'access to the role occurs by means of identification. The need to identify is more important to powers stability than the model identified with' (Revolution of Everyday Life).

The risks involved in taking direct action place many strains on the individual. The identification with a role can add to this. For example, if you are associated with being a 'hardcore activist' and you have played up to this role then a certain type of behaviour is expected of you even when you don't feel up to it. Eventually self-sacrifice to roles leads to burnout or disillusion, this can have a knock on effect for others who have identified with the role you played:

reach out to those 'communities' rather than appearing to be a private cult for freaks. It must offer real moments and relationships that fulfil people. This is especially true as many of us will be using these embryonic communities as places from which to resist and attack, and this resistance must be sustained.

Sun Tzu counselled that even under attack an enemy will only fall through it's own mistakes and weakness. The key to victory is not so much to defeat ones enemy, instead it is to make ones self undefeatable.

(Do or Die issue 10, Down With the Empire, Up With the Spring).

If our resistance is to be sustainable it must have a place for everyone to be supported by participating.

The repercussions of direct action get larger the older people get. The old adage that 'The workers have nothing to lose but their chains' could be replaced by 'The workers in the west have nothing to lose but their mortgages, jobs, custody of their children, pensions, and partners..' How surprising then that a movement whose whole strategy is based on risk, danger, transience and illegality, attracts only those too young to have obtained anything to lose.

(Club 18-30, self published EF! rant)

If our resistance is to be sustained it must be a project of inclusion, and security, as well as attack and defence. If developing an ecological sensibility is to be

evolutionary without coercion, then the need for self defence is obvious to allow space for this to happen.

The difference between a criminal and an outlaw is that while criminals frequently are victims. Outlaws never are. Indeed, the first step towards becoming a true outlaw is the refusal to be victimised. All people who live subject to other peoples laws are victims. People who break laws out of greed, frustration, or vengeance are victims. People who overturn laws in order to replace them with their own laws are victims. We outlaws however don't merely live beyond the letter of the law - many business men, most politicians, and all cops do that - we live beyond the spirit of the law. In a sense then, we live beyond society. Have we a common goal, that goal is to turn the tables on the nature of society. When we succeed, we raise the exhilaration content of the universe. We even raise it a little bit when we fail.

(from 'Still Life with Woodpecker', by Tom Robins, taken from *Cultures of Resistance*).

although obviously analysis and discussion have a role in clarifying how to act. Waiting only teaches waiting; in acting one learns to act.

(Insurrectionary Anarchy: organising for attack, Do or Die Issue 10).

Organisations, however informal, are made up of individuals, and individuals come with baggage. We all have insecurities, needs, hopes and dreams. We may wish to develop a better society but we are, on many levels, products of the society we have grown up in. We can be angry, shy, nervous, arrogant, desperate, despairing and damaged. We have learnt many negative ways of relating to situations and others in our world of power plays. One demon that rises in informal organisation, as much as in any other, is that of status. People feel a need to be valued and recognised by their peers. We look for aspects we value in other people and elevate them in status accordingly. Because of this and the bizarre situations you find yourself in when preparing for and taking direct action people often play a role; activist, revolutionary, peace maker, fool... the list goes on. This is not authentic behaviour, it is projecting a personality for political or personal reasons. This behaviour can atrophy into identification with that role placing individuals into representational hierarchies which skews genuine and effective collective organization:

The role is a consumption of power. It locates one in the representational hierarchy, and hence in the spectacle: At the top, at the bottom, in the

these organisations is complicity in their actions. Pragmatism as a strategy may provide dividends to those who believe in the short-term solution for the selected species of museum piece wildlife reserves, but it is only total resistance that has a chance of preserving a wild and diverse ecology for the future. This is a similar model of insurrectionary resistance to that used by insurrectionary anarchists, for example in the resistance in Sicily in the eighties against the construction of nuclear military bases:

These ad hoc, autonomous leagues took three principles to guide the organisation of struggle: permanent conflict, self management, and attack. Permanent conflict meant that the struggle would remain in conflict with the construction of the base until it was defeated. Without mediating or negotiating. The leagues were self-generated and self managed; they refused permanent delegation of representatives and the professionalisation of struggle. The leagues were organisations of attack on the construction of the base, not the defence of this or that group. (Insurrectionary Anarchy: organising for attack, Do or Die Issue 10)

This model has also been used to some success in ecological resistance, and animal rights actions in Britain.

Attack is the refusal of mediation, pacification, sacrifice, and accommodation in struggle. It is through acting that we learn to act, not propaganda, that we will open the path to insurrection -

How we do things is important... on organisation.

When we get out of the glass bottles of our egos
and we escape like squirrels turning in the cages
of our personality and get into the forest again,
We shall shiver with cold and fright but things will
happen to us so that we don't know ourselves.
Cool, unlying life shall rush in, and passion will
make our bodies taut with power,
We shall stamp our feet with new power and the
old things will fall down,
We shall laugh and institutions will curl up like
burnt paper
(D.H. Lawrence.)

People often feel uneasy about organisation - you feel like you give part of yourself up to it. The communication we feel most comfortable with tends to be the conversation. Our most comfortable social structure is the trusted group of friends. These are the ways that we generally prefer to organise our everyday lives. Sometimes the tasks we take on and the people we need to co-operate with to achieve our goals, require us to go beyond the 'comfort zone' of these everyday relationships. If we hold to the ideas of process (people, ideas, and situations, evolving) and of subjectivity (the participation and importance of the individual), as being important, and if we wish to evolve a society without hierarchy and domination, and with co-operation and mutual aid, then, how we go about things is vital. You can't separate yourself from what

you do, your experiences shape you. If this is true, and the experimental process develops this, then the tenant 'the ends justify the means', is false. It is more than likely that when you reach the 'ends', the situation and yourselves have been changed out of context by your actions. It is from this perspective I'd like to have a brief look at how we organise ourselves and our actions.

Although over the years there has been much criticism of mass organization (mass actions and mass movements), where the organisation and control is by the few and the attendance is by the many, there are still many groups working this way. Organising this way can be a temptation when you feel it would be good to get a lot of bodies on the streets or into the fields and you don't feel you have the time or capacity to do the proper ground work. Other groups just want to maintain control:

A mass movement mirrors the structure of mass society, a superficially unified mass of alienated individuals. In mass society the mass is controlled by factors such as: the State, corporations, media, and the spectacle. Mass movements are controlled by cliques, committees, and ideologies ...
(Earth First! Ha! Ha! Ha! Self-published EF! rant).

Besides the loss of control of the individual, mass organisation homogenizes us without recognising our diversity and alienation. The desire for a united opposition can obscure and suppress real differences that

bureaucratic. This will enhance our opportunities rather than lessen them.
(‘Anarchy in Action’, by Colin Ward).

This autonomy of individuals and collectives of individuals, maintains the subjectivity of our actions. When taking risks with our own lives and freedom it's important that we remain in control and that decisions are made from the reality of the situation:

Informal organisation must be based on an ethic of autonomous action: Autonomy is necessary to prevent our active powers from becoming alienated, to prevent the formation of relations of authority. Autonomy is refusing to obey or to give orders, which are always shouted from above or beyond the situation.
(Insurrectionary Anarchy: organising for attack, Do or Die Issue 10).

Our counter culture and resistance should be built from an ever shifting plethora of networks and relations, where if one becomes moribund and obsolete others flower. This autonomy, self-management, and focus on attack (as opposed to the building of organisations), should be joined with uncompromising resistance. We don't wish to barter away our future from a position of weakness, or to help governments and corporations make their capitalism more efficient, or seem more acceptable by offering 'green' concessions. When a system is based on ever increasing exploitation and 'growth' that is mutually exclusive to a healthy ecology for all species, then negotiating with

It is the perceived need for control and the maintenance of that organisations image, of those who have invested in an organisation, that are some of the factors that foster elitism and hierarchy:

The organisation must always worry about how the actions of others will reflect on the movement; they must therefore attempt to discipline the struggling multitude and try to control how the movement is represented in the media. ('Insurrectionary Anarchy: organising for attack', Do or Die Issue 10).

The way we organise is important in all aspects of our lives, but is of particular importance in relation to ecological resistance. When we resist the forces that are destroying our ecology we are pitting ourselves against large established vested interests. If we are effective they will try to break us. We can use our decentralized organisation techniques as a strength and as a defence. Autonomy, especially in the context of struggle against large centralised governments and corporations, is an effective defence mechanism for our movement. It is difficult for them to comprehend and means they can only ever have limited success in breaking us while our will to resist exist.

It (government) is incapable of dealing with a movement where nobody takes orders from anybody else. Through action, autonomy and revolutionary initiative, we will be developed still further. To cope with our activities the apparatus of oppression will become even more centralised and

will eventually have to be faced:

The principle of unity is based on the proposition that everyone is a unit (a fragment). Unity means one multiplied by it's self. We are going to say it straight - in so far a unity has suppressed real political differences - class, racial, sexual - it is a form of tyranny. The dream of unity is in reality a nightmare of compromise and suppressed desires. We are not equal and unity only perpetuates inequality.

(Anti-Mass: Methods of Organisation for Collectives, and Methods for the comunalisation of confusion a Situationist critique of 'Anti-mass').

Appeals for community and demands for unity don't make it real, it is a process that can only evolve through genuine relationships and common bonds. People will eventually become disillusioned with pretence and discard the social bonds that are needed for a co-operative society:

We have nothing in common except the illusion of being together. Certainly the seeds of authentic collective life are lying dormant within the illusion itself - but real community remains to be created. The power of the lie sometimes manages to erase the bitter reality of isolation from men's minds. In a crowded street we can occasionally forget that suffering and separation are still present. And since it is only the lies power that makes us forget, suffering and separation are reinforced; but in the end the lie itself comes to grief through

relying on this for support. For a moment comes when no illusion can measure up to our distress ... excluded from genuine participation, men's actions stray to the fragile illusion of being together, or else remain locked in its opposite, the brutal, total rejection of social life..
(Revolution of Everyday Life)

As mass organisation is not authentic participation, it becomes symbolic, obscuring real change and understanding.

'Here again we see the truth of the argument that powers strength lies in it's facility in enforcing both actual separation and false union.'
(Revolution of Everyday Life).

A recurring theme in the history of radical organisation is that of 'collectives' as an antidote to mass organization: "....opposed to this (*mass organisation*) is face to face full participation and communication of self managed small groups or collectives. (Earth First! Ha! Ha! Ha!). As a further limit on the centralization of power some advocates of collectives believe in only taking local small scale action to maintain full participation and self-management. Others believe that we should carry on experimenting to develop ways to co-ordinate large scale insurrections without compromising these principles. In other parts of Europe anarcho-syndicalists have used various collective structures organised by delegated committees (delegates being recallable and only relating decisions of the collec-

This is a form that can take on the reality of our diversity and build on our common understandings and objectives rather than subsuming ourselves to an artificial entity which misrepresents us all. By taking action people can find common cause with us or come to mutual understandings:

If the aim is an ecologically balanced and ... socially just society, derived through people taking control of their own lives, and so empowered, challenging hierarchy and abuse of power. The how we relate to each other becomes crucial. We do not need to share the same analysis to do all this and more. If as we learn we manage to pass on experience, skills and ideas, then agreement and resonance with these will be taken on by people and/or groups of their own accord, without the need for ideology or mission statements.
(Old Hacks (it) Apart).

Control should lie with those taking action, those involved in the situation, as their decisions and goals are usually focused on maximising their efforts to achieve the task in hand, not compromising for the sake of maintaining an organization:

Decisions that should be made by those involved in an action are deferred to the organisation; moreover, permanent organisations tend to make decisions based not on the necessity of a specific goal or action but on the needs of that organisation, especially it's preservation.
(*'Insurrectionary Anarchy: organising for attack'* Do or Die Issue 10).

We want to begin by taking the bureaucracy out of communication... the essential thing about it is it's directness and it's reliability. Eyeball to eyeball. Other forms of communication, telephone, letters, documents etc.... should never be used as substitutes for direct contact. In fact, they should serve primarily to prepare contacts. Why is it so important to have direct contact: because it is the simplest form of communication. Moreover it is physical and involves all the senses.

(Anti-Mass: Methods of Organisation for Collectives)

These fluid 'communities' based around simple structures that allow full participation around communicating and co-operating about real needs and desires are an alternative to the rigid organisation. For a lot of people this letting go of control of other people can be scary, but it can also be liberating:

.... it's not an organization and this makes our task difficult, but more worthwhile. It's great that I don't properly know about individuals or groups somewhere in the country doing fantastic stuff, but that means too that I can't tell them or anyone else how it is or how it should be. It's a radical message that says you're part of something which you can't define beyond your own locality, that links you up with other people you've never met that share a similar spirit, and that you can't speak on behalf of, or represent it's views or ideology - a strange kind of belonging without possessing.

('Old Hacks (it) Apart', self-published EFi rant).

tive, as opposed to representatives who are given authority to speak on behalf of others). In more recent British history some elements of the 'peace movement' have had very deliberate collective structures. The 'world turned upside down' street parties and living situations of 'Reclaim the Streets' initially had great success using co-operation between collectives and participation of individuals, but police clamp-downs and repetitive formulas made organisers into secretive cliques and participating individuals into punters. Insurrectionist parties transformed into 'mass actions' or 'counter cultural events.'

The key to organising a successful collective large scale insurrectionary action it seems, is not the desire of a small organising group or reaction to the manoeuvring and agendas of authority, but involved individuals and cohesive groups that are motivated to work together by a real need or an idea that captures the popular imagination. This means that large scale insurrection would need a lot of popular understanding, consent, and participation to happen. Which in my opinion is the way it should be. Experiments in large scale collective coordination continue to evolve and be defended, in action convergence spaces around the world. By using collective structures people can participate in the process of change, which at the same time changes themselves:

The collective is an alternative to the existing structure of society. Changing social relations is a process rather than a product of revolution. In

other words, you make the revolution by actually changing social relations. You must consciously create the contradictions in history. Concretely, this means: organise yourselves not somebody else ... the answer to alienation is to make yourself the subject not the object of history.

(Anti-Mass: Methods of Organisation for Collectives).

It is important to treat the collective as an organisational tool to be used when a group of people want to achieve something, rather than collectivism as an ideology where dysfunctional collectives atrophy and informal hierarchies develop internally. This demands a commitment to the principles underlying collectives and an appreciation of the realities of ever changing circumstances:

Fluid communities still require commitment to challenge informal power structures and hierarchies (tyranny of structurelessness) and to encourage active participation and supportive interaction. In this context, the collective is the time honoured structure that allows people to come together freely when needed for a temporary period for a specific focus, task, or action, using consensus as a tool, not a rule. With various levels of investment, you can be part of several different ones, and have access to the variety and freedom of ideas, the ebb and flow of energy, and the endless permutations and combinations of relationships with different people at different intensity in different contexts, that goes with the diversity of

a live community.

('Exist to Resist vs Exist to Exist', self-published EF! rant)

Even when the collective is defined by affinity, trust, and the ability to have authentic relationships and fluid conversations, it often still needs to co-operate and communicate with other collectives and individuals to achieve its aims. The instant reactions of many people is to try and put organisations in place to facilitate this. Organisations take on a life of their own which draws people's energies away from the tasks at hand. Organisation should be kept to the minimum necessary and only when needed:

The basic principle of contacts between collectives is: you only meet when you have something to say to each other. This means two things. First, that you have a concrete idea what it is you want to say. Secondly you must prepare it in advance. These principles help ensure that communication does not become an administrative problem. (Anti-Mass: Methods of Organisation for Collectives)

The basic level of organising is communication. In modern society communication has exploded, but it has been debased. A conversation is not about exchanging words: It's about developing understanding. We communicate with our entire bodies and demeanour not just language. Misunderstanding leads to problems and a lot of paper, phone calls, or emails, being shuffled backwards and forwards: